291 or netting, which reaches down to their knees or a little less. Some men of more sophisticated taste sometimes put on a sort of waistcoat, hand woven from garavata fiber and painted. Of the same material
[415] and made in the same way is the bag which they are in the habit of carrying at their side, in which, when they travel, they keep their flint and steel or the fiber and wax for their arrows and other small things which they use. When at home, at least at nighttime, they wear no clothes—possibly to keep from damaging them."

"There is no use looking for chiefs or captains with any
622 621 authority, for among them there are neither any who give orders nor any who obey them—they only have friendly respect for, and sometimes follow the advice of, someone among them who enjoys a certain prestige or who is very likeable. In time of war or common danger, some make limited alliances between a few huts only, for sake of unity." [602]

"They marry without any visible ceremony and without
582 formalities of any sort; nor do the parents play a role in the matrimony of their children, who marry when they wish to and to whom they wish—the women always give preference to a man who is adept at fishing, and the men seek out those women who are active and diligent in their search for fruit. Once a man and a woman have come
585 591 to an understanding they go off together into the forests for a few days, doing whatever they see fit to do, and return then to the encampment where they either set up for themselves or go to live with the woman's
595 parents-in-law. Few indeed are those who have more than one wife, even though divorce, among the younger set, is frequent. Adultery
837 684 also appears to be rare; the women do not consent to others having affairs with their husbands, on the contrary, they go to their houses and insult, threaten and fight them, a thing which often proves highly amusing to the men, women and children of the same camp, all of whom come out of their abodes to see the gestures and grimaces which the two women perform for each other's benefit, laughing uproariously and applauding noisily and gleefully the name calling and cursing, blows and kicks which they meet out to each other rather disgracefully.

774 "It would be useless to look for religious beliefs amongst a people so miserable, not to say stupid. It seems, nevertheless, that they do have some idea of the soul, which they call neusec, but about whose
776 ultimate destiny they have no clear idea. They also have a jumbled

skin color, and also because of the scratches which become caked, and 515
because of the sun's burning which wrinkles the almost scorched skin, especially on their shoulders; and finally because they go about barefoot and naked in the mud, through the underbrush and bushes, and as they lie down on the bare earth it is only natural that they should be covered with dust, just as we, who wash a thousand times a day do a thousand times become dirty again. They are not -- pardon the expression -- grubby, and I firmly contend that they are not dirty by nature.

An Indian camp is composed of an undetermined number of 342 [361]
dwellings, made by sticking branches into the ground and tying them together on top in the form of a cupola. Onto this frame they throw quantities of straw until it looks like, not a hut, but a wagon so loaded with hay as to cover the very wheels.

They hurl the straw from quite some distance and yet so accurately as to cause wonder, so much the more as it is the women who do this work. A hut, once finished, is so strongly constructed that a man can stand and move about upon it, and it is quite waterproof.

[177] Each chief has his own group of huts, like so many barracks, and sometimes, especially on the occasion of a declaration of war, [622] ●
many chiefs gather.

The huts are usually so low-ceilinged that one cannot stand up inside, but they vary as to length according to the rank of the family and the number of families which live in them. The long huts are somewhat humped, with two or more doors. The entrance ways are usually protected, on the windy side of the hut, by a fixed windbreak -- one must stoop in order to be able to enter.

A hut is divided into the following parts: the kitchens and the sections where sleeping, sitting, working etc. is carried on; however, there is no material separation between these parts.

The kitchen is nothing more than a swept space on which a fire [354]
is lighted, but only when the weather is cold or when the family mother [765]
is in mourning, during which time she does not leave the hut for a year, or allow herself to be seen, nor does she speak except when strictly necessary. The usual thing is to cook food outside near the entrance. There are as many kitchens as there are families.

The bedroom consists of that portion of the hut where they 352
place skins and clothes, if they have any, upon which they lie and which they put on when they go out if it is cold. On the walls at the

although they retain their position of ministers of "foreign affairs," 701
representing the tribe before outsiders either to treat some matter,
or to form an alliance for either war or peace. And even then
their leadership is not of much value for the members of the tribe,
the populace, are free to refuse to go to war -- although actually
their pride only rarely allows them to hold back.

When a chief plans an attack he gets the advice of the old 721
men of the tribe and of other influential persons, and if these do
not set their approval upon his plan he nevertheless invites those
who will to follow him.

Sometimes, though, large scale invasions are planned by
the allied chiefs of several villages. When we arrived at the vil-
lage of Chaguaral, we found there a group of eleven or thirteen
chiefs, all Matacos, who were awaiting the arrival of [194] their
allies with whom, shortly thereafter, they invaded the territory
of other Matacos who three months earlier had given them a good
drubbing.

While they are on their way to wage war they vociferate 726
wildly, shouting both threateningly and happily. They dye part [302]
of their faces and bodies black and sometimes muss up their al-
ready unkempt hair until they look like "lost souls," in the opinion
of a Christian Indian. On the eve of battle, those who have the
wherewithal deck their hair, waist and ankles with feathers, pre-
ferring red or yellow ones, and tie any rag they may have with
them tightly about their midriffs. When combat begins they
break out with the most bloodcurdling yells.

This business of putting on warpaint is common to almost 000
all savages: it was the custom also among those whom the Romans
called barbarians; for example, according to Claudius the
Sigambrians used to dye their hair a brilliant red before going into
battle.

The chiefs have the place of honour in the thickest of the 726
battle, which always results in the death of some of them. If the 622
invaders win, they sack everything, capture the women, the 727
children and cattle, parcel out the booty and set fire to the vil-
lage.

They give no quarter to the warriors and only rarely do they 727
spare the lives of the older women because they distrust them as

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6



*anétsiās vuh*, exerting a certain social influence. Chieftainship however, among the Choroti is rather nominal than real; even the »great chief» is in fact destitute of power, although in relation to other tribes and to the whites he exercises certain representative functions. Thus when commissions from the sugar factories arrived in the Chaco to negotiate about the sending of Indian labourers to northern Argentine, they had to deal with the chiefs, who through the medium of interpreters gave them answers on behalf of their people. But even the »great chiefs» cannot compel anybody to work, nor can they interfere with the private affairs of the families, in which the father and the mother have full liberty of action. Still more imaginary is the power of the village chief, who is nothing but a *pater familias* enjoying a certain esteem. He cannot command anybody, but merely represents his village community in relation to outsiders, just as the »great chief» represents the whole sub-tribe.

The dignity of chief is not hereditary among the Choroti, nor apparently among the Mataco. When the chief dies, the oldest family fathers of the community assemble under the big algaroba tree which serves as a club-house and elect a new chief, the election taking place in connection with a drinking-feast.

Old men are generally held in great esteem, and the chiefs are generally, although not invariably, men of advanced age. Among the Choroti, old men are held in particular esteem for superstitious reasons, since they are believed to be changed, after death, into evil spirits. As we shall see later on in the chapter on the religion of the Indians, the spirits of the Choroti are believed to appear in the shape of old men. Since the natural magical power of the human body is increased with advancing age, it is natural that old people are feared, but the supernatural halo which surrounds them of course at the same time is apt to give them social influence. Above all their supposed connection with the spirits makes them qualified to exercise religious functions. Independent of any particular initiation, every old man is credited with the power of conjuring the spirits and is thus always more or less a sorcerer. If therefore we wish to speak of a social distinction among the Choroti, we may say that the sorcerers, called *ayïeu*, are the only members of the Choroti society who in a certain sense form a class of their own or mark the beginnings of a social differentiation. Since, however, every old man is more or less expert in the act of magic and considered able to handle the rattle gourd (*pelïte*) or the drum (*wsyúk*), the *ayïeu* of the Choroti cannot be called professional sorcerers in the strict sense of the word.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12



M 846

»to be a little sick», which means that he has to be cautious with regard to his work and his diet, just like his wife. Any heavy work, hunting, fishing, the touching of iron instruments, is prohibited to the father, since otherwise his delicate son might fall ill and die. Fasting is likewise obligatory for both of them. The Mataco say of both parents: *uenhitātāk, yil vuh*, *i.e.*, »they do not eat, there are many demons of death» (moving about and threatening especially the child, but also the parents themselves). A light vegetable food, mainly consisting of boiled and mashed maize, is prescribed for both of them.

When the confined woman has been delivered, her ventral parts must be well covered to protect her against evil spirits which might do her harm. In the evening drums are beaten to keep off the same supernatural, malicious powers. If the woman is the wife of a great chief, a special dance is performed which the Mataco call *Katináh* and which takes place at great feasts celebrated by the whole village community. Like all other dances of the Mataco, the *Katináh* is in its character ceremonial or a sort of conjuration by which evil spirits are kept off or made harmless.

M [622 535]

T 846 622

Among the *Tobas*, just as in part among the Mataco, the ceremonies which are performed and the precautions taken are more elaborate when the mother is the wife of a great chief. Even some time before birth takes place the woman, as we have already seen, has to observe certain rules in regard to her diet, abstaining particularly from eating fish. As soon as the woman has been delivered her body must be well covered, for otherwise, I was told, the evil spirits may enter into her and kill both her and her new-born babe. The danger is particularly great at night. Therefore the Indians assemble in great numbers outside the chief's house, chanting the whole night, accompanying themselves with their rattle-gourds and drinking great quantities of algaroba beer. In the day the young men perform the dance *Nomí*. During the first days the woman does not leave the house, and although she is not ill she remains completely inactive. She likewise continues to fast, eating neither fish nor meat and living solely on maize and certain leaves. — The above ceremonies are performed, and the rules of diet are observed, during five days, or until the navel-wound of the child is completely healed.

T 846

Much the same ceremonies are performed when the mother is a woman of ordinary rank, with the exception that the father of the new-born child alone chants to his rattle the first evening after the birth; and the dance *Nomí* does not take place. The happy event is always celebrated by an algaroba drinking-bout. The mother does not stay in bed and

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12



The aversion to eating fish among the Toba women is met with in connection with mourning customs also. As to the ideas underlying this superstition, they will be considered in a later chapter.

The puberty ceremonies of the Bolivian *M a t a c o* are much the same as those of the Tobas. The first menstruation (*opetetéih* in the Mataco language) is regarded as a critical event which necessitates certain precautions. As is the case among the Tobas, these precautions are more elaborate when the girl is the daughter of a great chief. In that case she is completely isolated for five days, strictly dieting. Every evening drums are beaten outside her hut to keep off the evil spirits, the *aitláh* or *nahút* which are trying to do her harm. As usual, a drinking-feast is arranged for the men.

If the girl is the daughter of an ordinary man she is allowed to go out, but every evening a dance is held in her honour. This is the ring-dance which the Mataco call *Nahútsak* and which like all Mataco dances is purely ceremonial in its character. The girl sits in the middle of the ring, having the face covered with a cloth, while the other women dance and chant around her in order to keep off the *nahút*.

Not only the first menstruation, but similarly the following monthly courses of a woman are regarded by the Mataco as critical in so far as she is then particularly exposed to supernatural dangers. The Mataco woman therefore on these occasions always takes the precaution to restrict her diet, abstaining particularly from eating fish and meat.

There is one more custom which is practised among many Chaco tribes at the time of puberty and therefore may be considered in this connection — the custom of *tattooing*. Tattooing is done by the *M a t a c o* and the *C h o r o t i* in about the same way, the women being always and the men sometimes tattooed. The operation is carried out by an old woman: the skin is pricked with a cactus thorn or a sharp bone so that the blood flows, whereupon soot mixed with saliva is carefully rubbed into the wounds. Since the operation is of course extremely painful and makes the girl sick for some days, it is performed gradually, during the course of several years, the intention being that it should be completed when the girl is marriageable. Only the face is tattooed. The first marks are done on the forehead when the girl is about six or seven years old. In the course of the following years new marks — small circles, crosses, half-moons, lines — are added, and when the girl has attained the age of twelve to fourteen years and is considered marriageable, practically the whole face is covered with them. Since the wounds rubbed with ashes cause

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7



584 chooses a husband for his daughter, but he would never go
585 against his wife's wish. The ceremony is not celebrated.
The son-in-law lives first at the hut of his wife's father where
he stays for three months at least, working for him. Later
591 he can build a hut for himself. The young couple live in a
separate compartment.

Nowadays either the bride follows the bridegroom or he
595 goes to live with her, according to circumstances. Ordinarily
men have only one wife, some have two, but never more.
[593] Except for adultery a husband never beats his wife. Although
837 a woman is exposed to a severe beating if her husband discovers that she has betrayed him, it does not prevent many women from doing so. A woman will choose a day when her husband is absent and then send a child to tell her lover that she is alone. A couple must not be seen together for there would be some gossip. A man generally leaves an
[578] unfaithful wife after beating her first. He challenges his
[831] rival and they fight with knives. The different »milks» must not be mixed up.

## XVI. Chiefs

622 All the members of the tribe follow the *cacique* everywhere without protest. As for him, he is responsible for all the members of his group. If one of the latter has committed
[672] a theft, even outside of the tribe, the *cacique* will be arrested
[627] by the police. Quarrels among members of the same group are settled by the *cacique*. If a big *cacique* is killed in a
[726] fight his troop retreats immediately, even if the other *caciques* are still living.

## XVII. War

726 In ancient times, when a young man was going to war,
825 he pinched the skin of his thigh and drove the sharpened bone of a jaguar into it. This operation was supposed to make the warrior courageous. Members of a war party did the same with a peccari's bone so they would be fierce,

## The Functions of the Chief

627 The ex-chief of the San Andrés region, on the Pilcomayo river, was the famous Cuchitoro, who received three leagues of land along the river from the government of Argentina. The present day chief of this region is called Santiago, and he was made chief by the white colonizers who hoped to win him to their service. Nevertheless, Santiago remained loyal to his people.

The principal functions of the chief, according to their [648] description to me at San Andrés, consist nowadays in representing his tribe before the whites and in patching up, amicably, any conflicts 622 arising between groups of Indians in his territory. If a murder is com- 627 mitted in one group it is the chief's duty to require the killer's family 682 to pay the blood price. The amount of such compensation depends upon the social status of the victim. If it is a matter of an old and inactive man the loss is considered of little importance and a couple of goats and an old rifle are sufficient to re-establish friendly relations between the victim's and the murderer's groups. In other cases the injured party demands a horse, three goats, a rifle, etc. If the blood price is put too high the chief in charge of the matter may seek out the head of the dead man's family and ask him to lower the price. [14]

682 In former times the law of an eye for an eye was meticulously carried out. The Indians of San Andrés had killed a man from a neighboring village whose inhabitants then emigrated to the Bermejo river. Fifteen years later a nephew of the dead man made the entire trip from the Bermejo to the Pilcomayo to square matters with the murderers and killed, in his turn, one of the Indians of the village. He then returned to the Bermejo without being pursued.

726 The last Indian war took place in the San Andrés region in 1928. The people of the village of San Martin attacked San Andrés, under cover of darkness. Firing continued until daylight, but--as often happens in these battles--no one was killed or wounded. Some time later the people of Yuto joined with the inhabitants of San Andrés to attack the San Martin Indians. They passed by the Mission composed and dressed for war, painted and adorned with feathers. Before the attack they executed a war dance in the bed of the Pilcomayo river,

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7



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[177] Fig. 2.—Two Mataco girls electing partners among the younger men, who are performing their nightly chain-dance. Nowadays, especially the young men wear European rags. Flash-phot. Fock.

Formerly,

582 it was customary that two bands lived close to each other as, for example, the satnáy and sitóy, and consequently the girls from the satnáy preferred to marry men of the sitóy band, and girls of the sitóy men of the satnáy band. The two bands became so inter-married that "the whole thing was like one band", and the two chiefs were able to discuss questions of dispute. Here, therefore, developments had gone in the direction of forming temporary, loose marriage classes. The descent rules of the Mataco are patrilinear, so that, theoretically, exogamy should not impede cross-cousin marriage. In the meantime, there is no example of this practice, the nearest case being a single instance of a man's marriage to a sister's daughter. These cases must presumably be understood as expressing a man's wish to preserve his original locality. This is theoretically only possible in a matri-local exogamous patrilineal system by marrying one's sister's daughter.

583 It has been mentioned that a young man and girl who move in together always move to the house of the girl's family. Here they merely dwell temporarily, as a rule for about a year, so that the girl can give birth to her first child with the advice and assistance of her mother. The previous sexual relations of the girl are considered as trial marriages, but the birth of the child is regarded as the final test, whereafter she and the child's father are deemed to be married. She is then called *enutnha tahnayéy*. Should a girl prove with child during a trial marriage,

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7



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[593] Fig. 3.—Normally separated during the day because of different occupations, the single family joins during the night in gossip and sleep. In winter the Mataco sleep indoor on platform beds, in summer normally in the open on furs and with a log as a pillow. Flash-phot. Fock.

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in their conversation and show no sign of affection. A man going out to hunt merely says: "I am off and shall return in 3–4 days". She says at most "Very good", and when he comes back there will be no form of greeting or conversation. Married couples who break this rule and evince great devotion or jealousy are not expected to remain together for any length of time, as in this way they will bind themselves to each other. This will stop them attending to their respective occupations which often take them in different directions. Devotion between man and wife, undoubtedly often present, belongs to the night only and is closely connected with the sexual life. It is as though the recollection of the first trial marriage has delineated a pattern to be followed; first the intimate, nocturnal meeting at the dancing-place and in the girl's home; then the sudden awakening to the demands of the father-in-law. It is a general feature with both children and adults that they are far more confident and daring by night than by day.

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The Mataco are monogamous. There are very few examples of men with two or three wives, and then it was always a matter of chiefs. The polygyny of chiefs is probably an ancient custom, as it is sanctioned in the account about the first appearance of woman. Incidentally, monogamy is strictly enforced, and no form of extra-marital sexual relations is socially sanctioned. In case of infidelity